

Will W. Alexander

Rev. Will W. Alexander (Acting) 1935-36



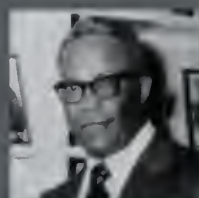
William Stuart Nelson

Dr. William Stuart Nelson 1936-40



Albert W. Dent

Dr. Albert W. Dent 1941-69



Broadus N. Butler

Dr. Broadus N. Butler 1969-73



Myron F. Wicke

Dr. Myron F. Wicke (Acting) 1973-74



Samuel DuBois Cook

Dr. Samuel DuBois Cook 1974-97



Michael L. Lomax

Dr. Michael L. Lomax 1997-Present

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219th Century New Orleans

From the President

3 Working School The University of Dillard

The history of an institution—like the history of a family or a nation—is essential to confirming past contributions, establishing present identity, and determining future direction. Dillard

University's history is richly interwoven with the perseverance of a people and the promise of a nation. Our story is one of cooperation and courage shared by individuals and organizations representing diverse interests and varied backgrounds. It is the story of a continuing commitment to excellence and a steadfast determination to pursue it. Most important, Dillard's story—grounded in a proud past and growing out of a challenging present—is reaching toward an even brighter future.

This brief history offers merely highlights of Dillard's extraordinary tradition of academic excellence and its remarkable record of service to its students, the community, and the nation. However, the 21st century affords opportunities of unprecedented dimension—and the greatest years of this institution's history are yet to be written. That *future history* rests in our hands today as members of the University family and in the hands of those who will follow us—just as we follow those who blazed trails before us. Our task, then, is to compose Dillard University's future history of excellence even as we record the institution's unique past history of excellence—the opening chapters of which are chronicled on the pages of this document.

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Michael L. Lomax

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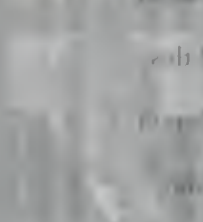
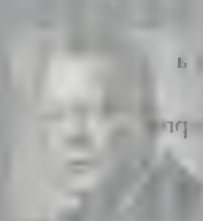
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James L. Dent

19TH CENTURY NEW ORLEANS: PARADOX AND PROGRESS

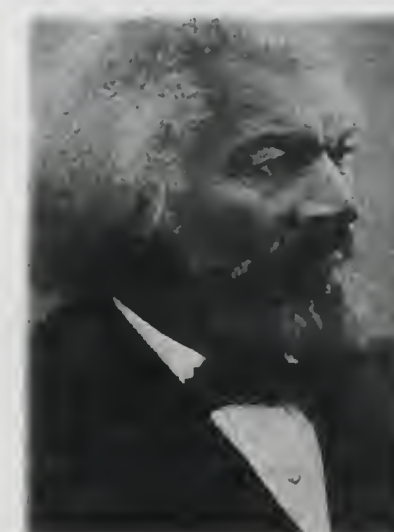
Postbellum New Orleans in many ways was a unique yet "typical" Southern city, the cosmopolitan product of various cultures. West African, French, Spanish, and Caribbean influences merged around this port and its lucrative economy to create an internationalism unique among cities of the United States. In this tropical environment and, to some degree, the interior of Louisiana, wealthy cotton barons, French merchants, Creoles, and former black slaves came together to create a singularly dynamic culture on the banks of the Mississippi. Indeed, in the nation's imagination, New Orleans is distinguished as much by its people and culture as by its location.

Diversity notwithstanding, to understand New Orleans historically is to realize that, in some ways, it was very much akin to other Southern cities. The cotton that generated so much of New Orleans' wealth, and subsequently gave many landowners the discretionary income to commission the city's stunning architecture, was derived primarily from a plantation economy. In fact, conditions for slaves in Louisiana were considered by many to be among the harshest in the nation.

Historically and rather ironically, however, Louisiana boasted one of the most progressive and successful Reconstruction efforts in the South. The state's constitutional convention of 1867 not only placed blacks in significant positions of social and political authority, but also allowed these newly elected men of color to establish the "civil and political equality of all men" (Bell 1). Under their leadership, public accommodations, transportation, education, and other areas were fully integrated — accomplishments 100 years ahead of their time.

Notably, racial progress was related directly to the stratification of race in New Orleans along caste lines, the three primary groups being white, creoles, who were of mixed racial and/or ethnic ancestry, and blacks. Afro-Creoles and blacks had carved out for themselves a distinct culture in which many whites participated, resulting in a spirit of "creolization" that made possible the radical changes — the paradox and progress — of 19th century New Orleans.

Dillard University was named in honor of James Hardy Dillard, a well known educator who was committed to the cause of education for blacks.



The groundwork for Reconstruction was generated to a considerable degree by the literary tenacity of blacks including Frederick Douglass.

OUR WALLS OF PRIDE

"All who teach and study within these walls were chosen because they are presumed to have pride in their heritage, pride in themselves, and pride in their capability to achieve excellence in their chosen fields. Our abiding faith is that they also know the difference between the genuine pride that is grounded in achievement and that proud arrogance which is the ploy of the inferior performer."

President Broadus N. Butler, Dillard University

Convocation Address-September 23, 1969

On September 24, 1935, Dillard University opened its doors for the first time. This historic event represented a great triumph for generations of African Americans at a time when the entire nation was reeling from the Great Depression — and the South, including New Orleans, was staggering under the additional social and economic burdens of

Jim Crow segregation. In a real sense, however, ground had been broken for this great institution many years earlier in the histories of New Orleans University and Straight University, the two schools that consolidated to create Dillard. As such, the founding of Dillard University represents the fruition of a long tradition of interracial coalition built on the generous philanthropy of white Americans and the extraordinary determination of black Americans to realize the promises of Reconstruction and the hopes and dreams of a people. This interracial cooperation is symbolized in the fact that this historically black University was named for a noted white philanthropist and educator, James Hardy Dillard. Born to one of Virginia's oldest families, Dillard was committed firmly to the cause of education for blacks, serving from 1907 to 1931 as

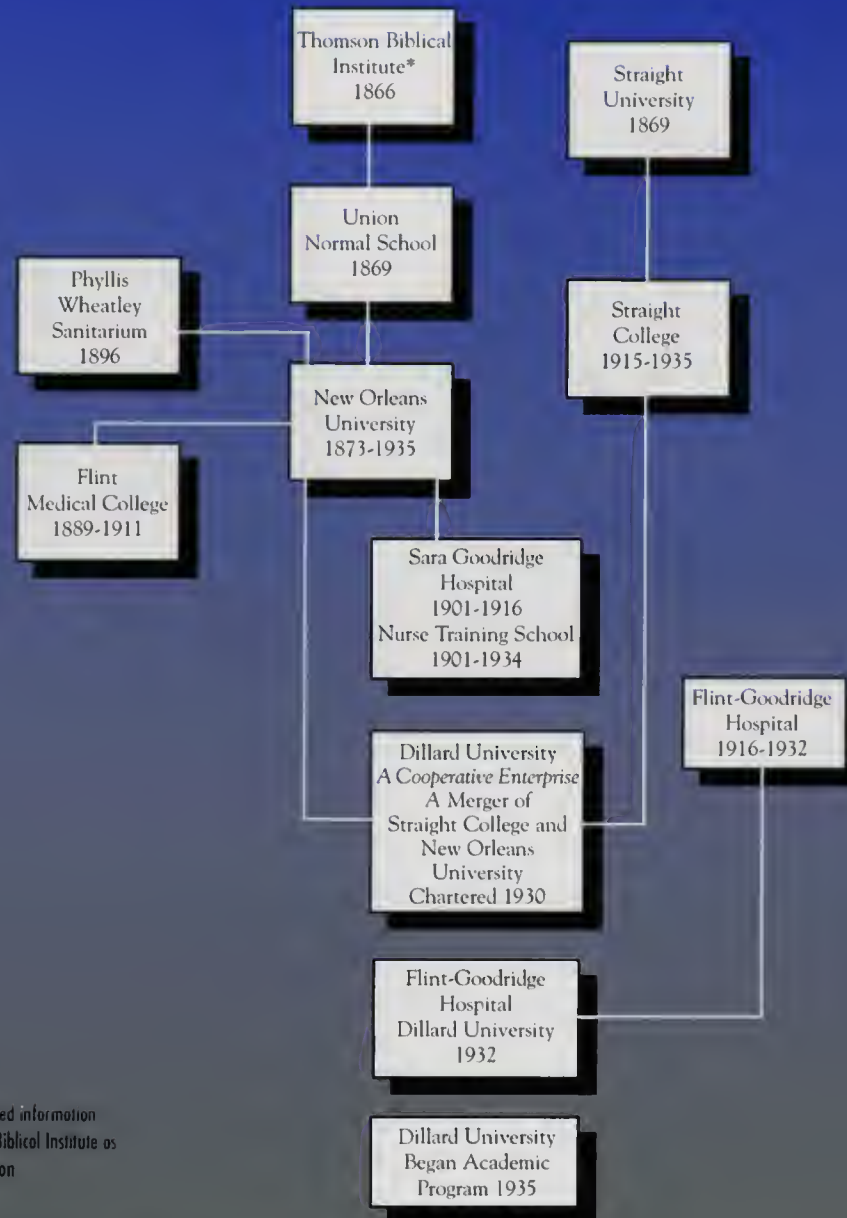
president of the Jeanes Foundation for Negro Rural Schools and earning the respect and trust of members of both races throughout the South.

Dillard University owes its academic lineage and status as an African American heritage institution to two sources: on the one hand, the far-sighted support of ardent Northern missionaries and wealthy industrialists and, on the other, the

vision and hope of a people born into slavery, many of whom did not live to see Emancipation. It is these early "pioneers of culture" who set the precedent in their campaigns for nationwide, universal public education and instilled in their children and subsequent generations the conviction that education — a democratic birthright — is the only key to enduring liberty.

Indeed, the groundwork of Reconstruction did not begin with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 or the end of the Civil War in 1865. It was generated to a considerable degree during the antebellum period by the literary tenacity of a small group of blacks, including Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Harriet Jacobs. Appreciation of the importance of literacy, however, was not

A DILLARD UNIVERSITY HERITAGE*



* This research discovered information identifying Thomson Biblical Institute as a predecessor institution

limited to the privileged few but shared by the many. As legislators worked rigorously to suppress its attainment among slaves, many blacks came to understand that literacy was synonymous with power and, as such, constituted an investment that would open the doors to citizenship and capital enterprise.

As early as 1860, even before northern missionaries came South to proselytize former slaves and establish educational institutions for them, "native schools," founded and run illegally by blacks, existed in Louisiana. James D. Anderson, in *The Education of Blacks in the South*, reveals that "[i]n July 1864, for instance, the black New Orleans Union commemorated the founding of the Pioneer School for

Freedom, established in New Orleans in 1860, 'in the midst of danger and darkness'" (Anderson 7).

This early interest in education on the part of blacks points to their recognition that education was tied inextricably to freedom, civil rights and civic responsibility. They understood that they needed literacy and numerical skills to engage in successful commercial ventures in the nation's marketplace. Echoing the ideal of self-determination for the black community, "[t]he New Orleans Black Republican proclaimed in April 1865: 'Freedom and school books and newspapers, go hand in hand. Let us secure the freedom we have received by the intelligence that can main-



Early photograph of "The Mansion"—The President's Home.

tain it.'" (Anderson 18). Thus, when "legalized" formal education arrived in the South, black supporters clamored for the kind of education enjoyed by the children of white Northerners. Such an education, drawing not on industrial training but a classical curriculum, promised to train strong black leaders — ministers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and business people.

Despite the newly freed blacks' desire for self-determination, they did not possess the necessary funds to maintain an organized system of education for their children. The Methodist Episcopal Church, committed like other abolition-affiliated religious denominations to continue support for racial uplift programs, established its Freedman's Aid Society on August 7, 1866. Such supporters recognized, as did blacks, that the primary focus should be promotion of both comprehensive education and the ministry. Unfortunately, little information survives regarding the early pioneer schools that eventually led to the formation of Dillard University, except for the minutes of the Mississippi Mission Conference and the affiliated Louisiana Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a brief chronological sketch of the church's significant involvement in institution-building. This sketch, "Seventy Years of Service: New Orleans University" (1935), published by the school's faculty, indicates that the roots of the early schools can be traced directly to the establishment of the Thomson Biblical Institute.

The Thomson Biblical Institute was founded in 1866 to train freed men as ministers of the cloth. It was named for Bishop Edward Thomson, who presided in 1865 at the first session of the Louisiana Annual Conference, which was established that year as part of the Mississippi Mission Conference. The conferences helped to maintain Methodist Episcopal Church schools. However, the Thomson Biblical



(Top Right) Early photograph of the original Straight University main building.
(Above) Main Building.

Institute's ideological slant did not prove rewarding for many African Americans and, after three years of operation, the institute became a biblical department within another early Methodist Episcopal Church venture, the Union Normal School (*Seventy Years* 8). The latter was incorporated on July 8, 1869, and opened November 1 of that year on the bottom floor of a two-story building at Camp and Race Streets, facing Coliseum Square.

While the Thomson Biblical Institute catered to the needs of the ministry, institutions such as the Union Normal School trained the black teachers sorely needed throughout the South. In 1869, the incoming student body numbered a mere 72 students. However, the need for higher education was thoroughly impressed upon the minds of Methodist Episcopal Church officials and, in fall 1873, the



(Top Left) The Straight University Class of 1901 included: Mary Remy, (front row, left) and Meothilde Cobrere (front row, right); Lucy DeGuercy (second row, second from left), James Sylvester Dungey (second row, center), and Victoria Alloin (second row, right); and James H. Murray (third row, second from left). Other members, not specifically identified but included in the picture, were: Estelle Cognoloti, Velmo Lloyd, David Foote, George Morsh, Charles Merrit, Estelle Montgomery, Morgorel Shepherd, Alice Vonnier, Nellie Onoto, Beatrice Banks and John Wholey.

(Top Right) The Straight University Class of 1906 included: (standing, from left) Ollie Belle Montgomery, James McGinnis and Irene Copeloin; (seated from left) Elviro C. Moson, Blaise Duhec, Ellen E. Colwell, and Sophio L. Hargrove.



Peck School of Domestic Science and Art

"I wonder if this is the world I was born in! For twenty years I was a slave on these streets. It was a penitentiary offense to educate a Negro. I have seen my fellow-servants whipped for trying to learn; but today here I am, on this great avenue, in this great city, with bishops and elders and the people of the great Methodist Episcopal Church, speaking at the breaking of ground where a building is to be erected for the education of the children of my people. I wonder if this is the world I was born in." (Brawley 279)

Union Normal School became New Orleans University, opening its doors to 335 students. The president of the new institution was Rev. Isaac S. Leavitt, who had served as president of Thomson Biblical Institute and Union Normal School. Leavitt worked with Rev. J. C. Hartzell, then pastor of the Ames Methodist Episcopal Church, to convince the state legislators to approve the university's charter.

Of considerable historical significance is the fact that a former slave, Rev. Emperor Williams, was among the signers of the charter for New Orleans University. Born a slave in 1826, Williams gained his freedom in 1858. A master mason and a founding and active member of the Mississippi Mission Conference, he is an outstanding example of the African American zeal that fueled renewal and change during and after Reconstruction (Seventy Years 11). In 1866, at the laying of the corner stone for New Orleans University's new building on St. Charles Avenue, square number 48, in a section of the city known as "Rickerville," Rev. Williams proclaimed to his audience (Seventy Years 14):

These words, which are indicative of the great hope invested in New Orleans University, symbolize the very real accomplishments of interracial coalitions. Dark had been the hour of slavery. Yet, by 1873, African Americans had secured the right to train for and practice both law and medicine in the state of Louisiana. The appellation "university," although many of the classes taught were at the high-school/pre-college level or below, was a testimonial to African American aspirations in higher education and the professions.

Indeed, New Orleans University was part of a larger network of institutions geared to fostering educational and community outreach and support. For example, the Orphan Home on the Bayou Teche for orphans of black union soldiers, founded in 1863 and later known as the Saeger-Brown Orphanage, and the Peck School of Domestic Science, an industrial home for girls, founded in 1867 served needy black children in New Orleans and surrounding areas. Gilbert Academy and Agricultural College, established in 1870, performed a similar duty and endeavored to become one of the nation's premier preparatory schools for blacks.



These Straight University students drove 26,000 miles in this Ford truck from 1918-1921 to raise funds for the university: (from left) Clarence Norris, Jerome Corlyle, Leon Hamilton, James Herod and Louis Richards.



The Straight University home economics class of 1907 included: (front row, from left) Eva Copeloin, Florence Dunn and Rito Holt; (middle row, from left) Emma Adolphe, Ooro Guichard, Instructor Mary Nichols, Mary Bender, and Claudio Gotes; (back row, from left) Annie Alston, Beatrice Lewis, Lelio Johnson, Euphemie Jacques, and Sylvio Word.



Flint-Goodridge Hospital's early practitioners, who were pioneers in the medical field in 1908, included these members: (front row, from left) E. Peyton, Walter Ennis, Mr. Speights, Fred Allen and John Morrums; (back row, from left) Fristen Dean, Echols Payne and John Miller.

The establishment of professional training facilities, particularly those pertaining to medicine, had a more direct relationship to New Orleans University and its mission. When the university's charter was signed in 1873, one of its stipulations was that medical students would have access to Charity Hospital in New Orleans to gain "hands on" experience. However, it was not until after several attempts and money generously donated by Mr. John D. Flint of Massachusetts, that a medical college was formed.

In antebellum days, black doctors had been permitted to study only in the North or abroad. Now they were offered the opportunity to train and practice medicine in their own communities. Flint Medical College attracted the finest candidates in the South by establishing a highly rigorous academic program covering all areas of general and specialized medical knowledge. It should be noted that women also were involved in the establishment of the medical profession and facilities for black citizens. In 1894, the Phyllis Wheatley Club was formed by a group of leading black women who wished to provide private medical care for members of their race who could afford an alternative to Charity Hospital. The subsequent opening of the Phyllis Wheatley Sanitarium in 1896, with the aid of Flint Medical College facilities and students, met that need and increased the demand for trained black nurses to work alongside physicians. Later, when the sanitarium encountered financial difficulties, it was rescued by New Orleans University and

money was secured from Mrs. Caroline Mudge of Boston, who renamed the facility in 1901 in honor of her mother, Mrs. Sara Goodridge. Similarly, by 1910 Flint Medical College was unable to meet the accreditation standards of the American Medical Association. A lack of funds prevented modernization of Flint, and students were transferred to Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee. Although Flint Medical College eventually failed, its pioneering spirit survived. In 1916, the Sara Goodridge Nurse Training School joined the black medical centers in New Orleans to form Flint-Goodridge Hospital (Christian 22).

The Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was not the only religious philanthropic organization operating in New Orleans after the war. On June 12, 1869, one month before the Union Normal School was founded, Straight University was established by the American Missionary Association (AMA), an agency of the Congregational church. The university was named for the Hon. Seymour Straight—a Baptist layman, educator, businessman, philanthropist, New Orleans city council member, and uncompromising opponent of slavery. Unlike New Orleans University, Straight University and its affiliated institutions were to be free of denominational emphasis (Brawley 293). The first building, at Esplanade Avenue and North Derbigny Street, was destroyed by arson in 1877. A new central building, Straight Hall, was erected the following year on Canal Street at the corner of Tonti. By the early



New Orleans University's Stellar faculty. (front row, from left) Ms. Reeves, Prof. Moses, Mrs. Moses, Mrs. Cato, President Kriege, Mrs. Kriege, Mrs. McDonald, Mrs. Hayes, and Dean Hayes. (second row) Ms. Daniels, Ms. Smith, Ms. Keith, Mrs. Cameron, Ms. Conody, Ms. Aust, Mrs. Daniels and Mrs. Robinson. (third row) Professors Walker, Jones, Belton and Stuart, Coach Augustine and Professors Griffith, Dutton and Madlin.

1880s, the campus had expanded to include Whittin and Stone Halls, dormitories for men and women, respectively (Straight University Catalogue 49).

From the outset, Straight University promoted training in the professions of law and medicine. Students who successfully completed the law program were automatically admitted to the Louisiana State Bar without examination. Although both departments were relatively short-lived, the law department in particular produced brilliant and highly distinguished graduates who made their mark on Louisiana and U.S. history. Louis A. Martinet, M.D. (Class of 1876) and Rudolphe L. Desdunes, author of *Our People and Our History* (Class of 1882), were founding members of the Comité des Citoyens, established in September 1891. The organization included prominent and, in some cases, wealthy Afro-Creoles who fought aggressively against Jim Crow segregation. Their work culminated in the landmark case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which they brought before the United States Supreme Court on May 18, 1896. Although the Court's decision upheld the doctrine of "separate but equal" and introduced the age of Jim Crow segregation, it also served to realize the missionary ideal that liberal arts education for black Americans would be "a means to achieve racial equality in civic and political life" (Anderson 240).

Straight University, which offered a liberal arts education, found it in the interest of its students and community also to emphasize manual education and teacher training. As the failure of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow defined the 1880s, black university graduates found considerably

fewer professional career opportunities. In New Orleans, employment for African Americans generally was confined to domestic and menial labor. As a result, Straight and other schools began actively promoting study in the industrial and domestic arts. Students often felt ambivalent toward such vocational training and, as late as 1904, successful farmers and others were brought in to exalt the merits of utilitarian training and the importance of students being "useful to their race and country" (Loud 13).

The lack of professional opportunities for black students was not the only dilemma facing the faculty and trustees of Straight University. With the dawn of the new century, financial worries beset the college as well as its counterpart, New Orleans University. Such problems were exacerbated by a stagnant Southern economy, the turmoil of World War I, and widespread violence against blacks. Aware that conditions were deteriorating for blacks in the South, Northern philanthropic organizations began to ponder the fate of these two different, yet similar, institutions. In 1914 and 1915, Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones visited Straight University and New Orleans University in connection with his monumental study of black education in the United States, under the supervision of the Bureau of Education, Department of the Interior, and in cooperation with the Phelps-Stokes Fund (Brawley 142). He realized, as did Dr. Frederick Brownlee of the AMA in 1920, that each institution was hampered by a lack of facilities and money and that both would benefit immensely from a merger of interests (Brawley 294).



Dillard University's original master plan, ca. 1938. Designed by Moise H. Goldstein.

In March 1928, President James P. O'Brien of Straight College, reclassified from its university status after losing the theology department in 1905, wrote to Edgar B. Stern, a wealthy New Orleans cotton broker, asking for help to raise five hundred dollars for the college. O'Brien did not realize at the time that his request would launch the campaign for "a great Negro university in New Orleans" (Brawley 295-298). In fact, his appeal to Stern led to the involvement of several of the nation's largest philanthropic concerns. The Julius Rosenwald Fund of Chicago (Rosenwald's daughter Edith was Stern's wife) and the General Education Board of New York, for example, as well as a number of prominent New Orleans citizens, pledged to support the two universities if they agreed to consolidate.

However, the merger of the two institutions was far from simple. Each board of trustees had to consider the reputation and integrity of its respective university, the loyalty of alumni, and the compromises required to create a mission statement for a new enterprise. Additional considerations included raising funds, locating a site, erecting buildings, and identifying a president and faculty who could sustain the founders' enthusiasm and meet the challenges a new university would encounter. On June 6, 1930, following a series of lengthy conferences, the trustees of the new institution proposed a charter.

Dillard University's charter, like those of Straight College and New Orleans University, called for the imple-

mentation of a coeducational, interracial school, serving a predominately African American student body and adhering to Christian principles and values. Furthermore, Dillard was to establish itself as an educational center of excellence in the South. The new university would offer a traditional liberal arts curriculum rather than nonprofessional, vocational training to compete with famous historically black institutions such as Fisk, Howard, and Atlanta. Dillard University

which later would forge close ties with New Orleans' black community through Flint-Goodridge Hospital and the University's various education extension programs, societies, and clubs was deeply rooted in the DuBoisian notion of classical training, a liberal arts education that would "discipline the mind" and stimulate both "the creation of ideas and the development of the higher qualities of the individual" (Brawley 120). As part of the "Objectives of the University," students were expected to be able to "appreciate, interpret, and create the beautiful," to "meet with understanding and decision the group of acute problems which they currently face by virtue of their racial identity," and to "achieve a world view, including a theory with respect to the nature of the universe and a philosophy of life" (Dillard University Bulletin, 1945). Building on the accomplishments and contributions of their predecessors, Dillard students would be trained as leaders of tomorrow.

The generosity of Edgar B. Stern and the Julius Rosenwald Fund was key to the success of Dillard University's



Flint-Goodridge Hospital 1932, a symbol of black achievement.

founding and ultimately ensured the future of the institution. However, a careful examination of issues surrounding this philanthropic giving offers insight into the complexities of race relations in 1930s New Orleans, suggesting, as have many, that while Stern was remarkably ahead of his time, he nonetheless was forced to undertake the reform within context of that time. Although Rosenwald, the Sears Roebuck magnate, and his son-in-law gave generously to "Negro" causes, it was difficult to challenge segregation. For example, Stern clashed with Brownlee of the AMA over issues associated with having an interracial faculty and staff at Dillard. Stern's dilemma was that naming a black president would place an African American in a position of power over white faculty and staff members. On the other hand, a white president would be placed in close social contact with black faculty and students and possibly give "offense to Southern tradition." Indeed, when "local white residents objected that buses to and from Gentilly [the site of Dillard's campus] would be crowded with blacks, [Stern] arranged for New Orleans Public Service to lay on special, all black buses during the peak hours" (Fairclough 35-40). Stern, who was both committed to Dillard University and keenly aware of the rigid social code of the South, was forced to be resourceful in his promotion of the institution.

The adherence to conservative social codes, however, did not limit the possibilities of black self-determination within the University. One of the keynote addresses at the cornerstone laying on May 27, 1934, was delivered by Mordecai W. Johnson, president of Howard University. Johnson fully

embraced the language of freedom, stirring the black members of his audience to claim their history and strive forward. In doing so, he captured the very essence of Dillard:

"There lies in this Southland today, buried in unmarked graves, many a black genius who would have blessed this city and this section of our country, if his parents could have had before them the Dillard University you are now building. My heart leaps up with great gladness for these mothers and fathers of the future. This institution is launched in a spirit which in my judgment will be the inspiration of the Negro people and of the South for hundreds of years to come." (Johnson, "The Meaning of Dillard")

Interestingly, Stern wrote to Edwin R. Embree, president of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, on June 12, 1934, that the highlight of the event "was a stunning address by Mordecai Johnson. It was one of the most eloquent speeches I have heard in many years" (Julius Rosenwald Fund Papers).

Because Stern was such a diplomatic member of Dillard's board of trustees, it is not surprising that the very congenial and tactful white Southern preacher, Will W. Alexander, was chosen as Dillard University's first president, although he served as acting president (1935-1936). At the time of his appointment, he was director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC). Founded in 1919, the organization actively campaigned against lynching and conducted research studies of issues pertaining to "Negro welfare" and other Southern "problems" (Fairclough 11). This background, along with his excellent administrative skills and his reputation for being an "effective social engineer" (Weaver, "Dedicatory Address"), allowed Alexander to



Dillard University's first black president, William Stuart Nelson

establish quickly and efficiently the working operation of Dillard University for its opening in fall 1935.

During Alexander's short tenure, one of his most significant contributions was recruiting an outstanding black faculty. Drawing from the pool of Rosenwald fellowship recipients and other noted scholars, Alexander assembled a stellar group of educators: Horace Mann Bond, dean of the University, psychology and education faculty; Charles Wesley Buggs, biology; Byrd Dewey Crudup, physical education; S. Randolph Edmonds, drama; Frederick Douglass Hall, music; Rudolph Moses, English; Lawrence D. Reddick, history; and J. G. St. Clair Drake, sociology and anthropology. Given the mounting pressures of Alexander's outside administrative responsibilities, particularly his position in Washington, D.C., as head of the Farm Securities Administration, he realized that he could no longer give full attention to Dillard and, by the beginning of 1935, he had expressed his desire to resign.

The search for Alexander's successor proved to be a watershed. For the first time in the 70-year history that included Dillard's predecessor institutions, a board of trustees could feel comfortable with the prospect of choosing a black president. A number of distinguished educators were considered: Charles S. Johnson, a leading scholar at Fisk University; C. H. Tobias, administrator for the National Council of the YMCA; Dr. Rufus Clement, president of the Negro Branch of the Municipal College of Louisville, Kentucky; Horace

Mann Bond, dean of Dillard University; and Albert W. Dent, superintendent of Flint-Goodridge and the business manager of Dillard (Julius Rosenwald Fund Papers). After considerable negotiation, Stern wrote to Embree on February 18, 1936, that the search committee had decided "unanimously to offer the position to Dr. William Stuart Nelson of Shaw University" (Julius Rosenwald Fund Papers). Nelson was a native of Paris, Kentucky. He received his A.B. from Howard in 1920 and Bachelor of Divinity from Yale in 1924, and attended the Sorbonne and the University of Berlin. He had served on the faculty of Howard and as assistant to President Mordecai Johnson. Most notably, as Shaw's president (1931-1936), Nelson had helped to "save" the financially troubled university in North Carolina.

During his four year-tenure (1936-1940) at Dillard, Nelson took to heart the missionary ideal of liberal arts education in a manner that would leave a lasting impression on the University's curriculum. At his inauguration in April 1937 he helped to launch "the aesthetic spirit of Dillard" (Dillard University, "A Service in Memory of William Stuart Nelson") with the implementation of a major arts festival. Funded in conjunction with the General Education Board and the Harmon Foundation, New York, the festival served to establish the ideals of the University by building a closer relationship between students and community and elevating awareness of the University throughout the nation. The gathering created a venue both for local artists and national figures to enjoy and debate the nature of African American arts and letters past, present, and future. Nelson sought to foster a sense of "cultural enlightenment and participation." His dedication to the arts laid the foundation for a tradition at Dillard that extends to the present day.

Nelson was instrumental also in founding the *Arts Quarterly*, a national black journal that captured the essence of black arts literature, drama, music, fine arts of the period. The journal brought together notable scholars and members of the African American literati Horace Mann Bond, Marcus B. Christian, Frank Marshall Davis, J.G. St. Clair Drake, S. Randolph Edmonds, Frederick Douglass Hall, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Alain Locke, Rudolph Moses, Ferdinand Rousseve, Melvin B. Tolson and Frank Yerby. In the foreword to the first issue, Nelson outlines the premises of both the journal and the University's credo, stating that the *Arts Quarterly* desires "to see men entire communities singing, acting, painting, seeing and hearing the beautiful which abounds. [It believes] that one of the great functions of home and school and commonwealth is to teach, to inspire, and to afford facilities to these ends" (Nelson 1).

The board of trustees initially looked favorably upon Nelson's academic vision, but tight budgets and the urgent need to expand the campus drove a wedge between the president and his would-be allies. Nelson's earlier requests for funding for a football team and faculty housing greatly complicated his relationship with the trustees. In 1940, his resignation was accepted gracefully, and he left New Orleans for a position as dean of the School of Religion at Howard University.

BUILDING A UNIVERSITY THE DENT YEARS



(l-r) T. K. Lawless, Fannie Williams, A. W. Dent, Mary M. Bethune, and Edgar B. Stern

To satisfy Dillard's third search for a president, the committee needed to look no further than the University's brilliant young hospital administrator, Albert W. Dent, who would serve as president for almost three decades (1941-1969). However, Dent's commitment to the University precedes his appointment as president by almost a decade.

In 1930, the hospital that Dent eventually would manage had been condemned for unsanitary conditions and was in desperate need of repairs. That year, the Straight College and New Orleans University merger was chartered and funds were allocated for a new site and new construction for the hospital, which was considered essential to the betterment of the black community. In 1932, the construction of Flint-Goodridge Hospital was completed and the facility came under the care of Dillard University and Superintendent Dent, then 27 years old. In the years to come, Flint-Goodridge Hospital, which Dillard sold in 1983, became a major institution in the black community of New Orleans.

Dent accepted with great confidence the task of improving health care for a poor and neglected community. He was aware of the challenge of providing medical services for a population with some of the highest rates of infant mortality and communicable diseases, such as syphilis and tuberculosis. It was an experiment that would require aggressive measures, one of which was his decision to improve first the lives of women and children by developing a maternity plan. As a result, poor African American women for the first time would receive prenatal care and give birth to their children in a hospital at a cost that rivaled the charges of local midwives. Dent later implemented his "Penny-a-Day" insurance plan a pioneering program that offered hospital services to groups of employed people for a mere \$3.65 per year. The initiative received national acclaim.

A graduate of Morehouse College, Dent was a favorite of the influential trustee, Stern. Even as Dillard's business manager, Dent was placed in an influential position, comparable to that of President Nelson. He was an able negotiator, "comfortable" handling Southern race relations. Stern fought vigorously for his acceptance by the trustees and the University's academic community. Although he had not



(l-r) A. W. Dent, Edgar B. Stern, Matthew Henson, and T. K. Lawless

earned an advanced degree, Albert W. Dent, during the next 28 years, proved himself to be a remarkable college president and an effective leader in the international field of health administration.

Although Dent left his hospital post in 1941 to dedicate more time to his role as president of Dillard, he continued to make a difference in the administration of Flint-Goodridge. By 1942, the University had the first and only accredited nursing program in the state. A pioneering black nurse and educator, Rita E. Miller, was instrumental in achieving this milestone. Miller understood the need to professionalize nursing, and she was committed to helping black nurses in particular to compete in the marketplace. With Dent's assistance, Miller devised a rigorous academic program, raising standards for admission to the newly created nursing division, and implemented an impressive five-year bachelor of science degree. The excellent working relationship between the academic program and the hands-on experience at Flint-Goodridge Hospital established Dillard "as a model and an inspiration for the development of other black collegiate nursing schools, most notably the one that came into existence at Florida A & M" (Hine 229).

In addition to his role in establishing a nursing program that continues to produce some of the finest graduates in the country, Dent's groundbreaking influence as president can be seen in the Gentilly Boulevard campus. When he assumed the presidency, the University, although set on 33 beautiful green acres, was badly in need of both renovation and expansion. The modest campus consisted of two main buildings, Rosenwald and Kearny Halls; two dormitories, Hartzell and Straight Halls; Howard House for guests; the



(Top Left) William Grant Still, an acclaimed composer and a guest of Dillard. (Top Center) Frederick Douglass Hall (first row and third from the left) and members of the first Black Music Teachers Conference held on Dillard's Campus. (Top Right) St. Clair Droke, esteemed social scientist and one-time faculty member of Dillard. (Center Page) Snapshots of Gilbert Academy. The prestigious preparatory school would survive long after the merger of Straight College and New Orleans University

President's Residence; and several small cottages for faculty (Reminiscences of Dillard 85). Dent's goal was to provide the resources and facilities that Dillard required as a viable academic center. He worked diligently with the University's master architect, Moise H. Goldstein, on plans to develop and enhance the campus' traditional classical architectural style brick buildings, painted white, with Doric columns. He remained focused for several years on raising the funds necessary to make the vision a reality, and the buildings followed in quick succession: Henson Hall gymnasium, 1950, named for the first African American explorer to reach the North Pole; Edgar B. Stern Hall science building, 1952; Lawless Memorial Chapel, 1955, dedicated to its benefactor Alfred Lawless, Jr., D.D., and his father, Theodore K. Lawless, M.D.; and the Will W. Alexander Library, 1961 (Reminiscences of Dillard 85). In this short time, Dent built or expanded literally 75 percent of the campus as it is known today.

The growing reputation of President Dent, also a founder of the United Negro College Fund, drew increased

attention to Dillard University as a historically black institution in the South. As the University earned a national and international profile, it served as host to a wide range of leading scholars, politicians, and artists. Such distinguished guests contributed greatly to the university's mission and its status as a center for liberal arts education. Dent was instrumental in organizing the Edwin R. Embree Memorial Lecture Series (1952-1955) "to strengthen the university's general program in helping its students achieve a high sense of personal and social values in their thinking and learning." The series, which included such noted figures as Eleanor Roosevelt, Justice Thurgood Marshall, and Ralph J. Bunche, was published also as a university monograph "to make the valuable statements and ideas presented in the collection available to a larger audience"

(Dent, Foreword). Other esteemed visitors during Dent's leadership included Mary McLeod Bethune, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jackie Robinson, Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, and Matthew Henson.



Dent also played an important role in changing the racial tenor of the times as an influential, behind-the-scenes negotiator on civil rights issues affecting New Orleans. For example, he met with Mayor deLesseps S. Morrison on several occasions to determine how best to handle the desegregation of the city's public services. Within the context of the University itself, Dent promoted events that served to shape an emerging new black identity. His launching of the annual "Festival of Afro-American Arts," February 12-19, 1968, brought progressive artists and community activists to perform and participate in programs on campus. Continuing a family tradition of commitment to the arts, his son, Thomas C. Dent, a dramatist, poet, journalist, and freelance writer, was an active member of the Free Southern Theatre and a coeditor of *Blkartsouth*.

Dent's tenure was all the more remarkable because he so ably guided Dillard University through the challenging decades of World War II, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Power Movement. Some argue against lengthy tenures, but this president's constant and capable hand at the helm may well have been the principal reason the University maintained a steady course through the rough seas of this tumultuous period. Indeed, it was on Dent's watch, in 1958, that Dillard was admitted to membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Brawley 309). Building on the foundation laid by those who preceded him, Albert W. Dent made enormous contributions to Dillard University, shaping much of the campus as it exists today and establishing the University's proud reputation as a small but first-rate institution of higher education.



Dillard's fourth
president,
Broadus Butler

The inauguration of Dillard University President Broadus N. Butler (1969-1973), a Southern intellectual, marked a renewed commitment to the liberal arts. President Butler's most important contribution to the University's intellectual life was his implementation of the Scholars-Statesmen Lecture Series, housed in the division of social sciences. The series was to "bring to the presence of Dillard University students and the New Orleans community a series of men and women who have made distinctive achievements in their own lives and who are themselves living models of the kind of excellence to which our students aspire and which our community should always respect" (quoted in Barbara G. Thompson's, "In Memory of Broadus Nathaniel Butler"). As early as the second lecture series, Butler's affinity for the arts and his belief in their importance to all, becomes apparent. For the discussion of the topic, "In the Pursuit of a Cultured Human Dignity," he brought to campus outstanding figures in education, the arts and law: Morehouse College President Emeritus Benjamin E. Mays, actress Etta Moten Barnett, artist Aaron Douglas, Harlem Renaissance writer Arna Bontemps, and Pennsylvania jurist A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr.

The continued emphasis on academic excellence and high moral responsibility enabled Dillard to carry on its mission as a historically black university during the period of desegregation that followed the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. While integration left many black colleges struggling to compete against the financial incentives offered by large research institutions, Dillard University continued to recruit academically talented black students with high aspirations. The board of trustees realized that the University would have to transform its curriculum to meet the needs of the "new" student body. Unfortunately, such changes clashed with Butler's ideal of a traditional, classical education and he chose to resign in November 1973. Following Myron F. Wicke's one-year acting presidency (1973-1974), Dillard welcomed the noted political science scholar, Samuel DuBois Cook, as president of the University.



President Samuel
DuBois Cook presents
an award of apprecia-
tion to Dr. Mitsuo
Miyata, Chancellor,
Kwansei Gakuin,
Nishinamiya, Japan

The beginning of the tenure of President Samuel DuBois Cook (1974-1997) was a starting point for the modernization of Dillard's infrastructure. A Georgia native and a classmate of Martin Luther King Jr. at Morehouse, Cook earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University. After holding the position of Chair of Political Science at Atlanta University, he became the first African American faculty member at Duke University, later serving on the institution's board of trustees. Cook was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from Duke in 1979.

Recognizing that students required preparation for an increasingly competitive international and multicultural marketplace, Cook set Dillard on the path to expanding the very concept of a historically black university.

Toward that goal, he created the Dillard University National Conference on Black-Jewish Relations in 1989 and established the Dillard University National Center for Black-Jewish Relations in 1990, the only center of its kind in the world. The initiative would attempt to "rejuvenate the Black-Jewish Coalition that was a driving force behind the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s" (Katz 25). Furthermore, its presence on campus would challenge students to expand their ideas about race relations in America and the University's rich heritage of Black-Jewish understanding. In recognition of Cook's humanitarian effort and untiring service, he was named to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council by President Clinton, and received the Weiss Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews for International Leadership.

Equally important to Cook's commitment to strengthening and expanding the curriculum was the found-



Award winning short story writer and novelist, Ernest Gaines, briefing Dillard students on the importance of literary arts.



(Top Left) Gerald Ford presides over a lecture for Professor Borboro Thompson.



(Top Right) Early Afro-American Arts Festival poster.



Advertisement for the Free Southern Theatre

ing of the Japanese Studies Program in fall 1990, an initiative unique among the nation's historically black colleges and universities. The interdisciplinary program allows students to examine Japanese language and culture, providing excellent preparation for the fields of business and international relations. Today, the program, a testimonial to Cook's vision, remains affiliated with Kwansei Gakuin University of Japan.

In developing an international reach and reputation for Dillard, however, Cook did not forget the institution's important relationship with the New Orleans community. Although the University no longer operates a preparatory high school, it continues to promote outreach programs for promising and "at risk" students throughout the city. The Federal Trio Program, "Talent Search," brings middle and junior high school participants to campus, while programs such as the Saturday Science Academy (SSA) and the Pre-Freshman Engineering Program (PREP) work aggressively to increase the number of minority professionals in the sciences.

Such outreach initiatives exemplify the Cook Administration's commitment to Dillard's ongoing tradition of community service, just as the impressive Samuel DuBois Cook Fine Arts and Communications Center symbolizes the administration's commitment to Dillard's liberal arts tradition. But the impact of Cook, the exceptional scholar and leader, is reflected far more comprehensively in a host of initiatives and a list of results too numerous to cite here. His contributions are apparent, for example, in the higher academic standards that he established, including raising requirements for admissions, increasing the number and percentage of faculty members with doctorates, and introducing a range of new academic programs. Under Cook's leadership, student enrollment increased by 50 percent, important capital campaigns were undertaken and substantial funds raised, capital improvements to the campus and facilities were completed, dramatic improvements were made in student services and athletics, participation by alumni was expanded, and a stronger sense of community was cultivated within the Dillard University family. During Cook's tenure, Rosa Freeman Keller was honored for her outstanding support of Dillard University. In 1995 Cook dedicated the Rosa Freeman Keller Avenue of the Oaks in honor of Mrs. Keller's long-time commitment to Dillard University and to racial equality in the city of New Orleans. Keller served on the Dillard University Board of Trustees from 1955-1998. Other supporters recognized under Dr. Cook's administration were Dillard alumni Dr. and Mrs. Andrew Young Sr., whose home was dedicated as the Dr. and Mrs. Andrew J. Young Sr., Faculty Center and Thelma and Sidney N. Collier, for whom the Collier Center is named. Clearly, in Dr. Samuel DuBois Cook, the University enjoyed the strong and dedicated leadership that was so essential during the dynamic latter decades of the 20th century.

Dr. Michael L. Lomax, who came to Dillard University on July 1, 1997, may be the ideal combination of scholar, administrator, and leader to guide Dillard into the new millennium. The vision and enthusiasm with which President Lomax has embraced that task are reflected in his observation that Dillard is "embarking upon the greatest and most ambitious mission in its 129-year history" (Dillard Today 2).

Lomax's background includes extensive experience in the public and private sectors. He served for 20 years as an elected member of the Board of Commissioners of Fulton County, Georgia's largest county, including 12 years as board chairperson. During his tenure as a commissioner, the county enjoyed a period of unprecedented economic expansion and population growth. As the county's top elected official, Lomax oversaw a work force of 5,000 and a budget of \$500 million. He founded the National Black Arts Festival, today the world's premier black cultural event, and played a key role in Atlanta's selection as the host city for the 1996 Olympic Games. Lomax is founder and former president and chief executive officer of Amistad Corporation. The firm, which specialized in the acquisition of funeral homes that traditionally served the African American community, merged in 1992 with the Wilson Financial Group.

Like his predecessors, Albert W. Dent and Samuel DuBois Cook, President Lomax is a graduate of Morehouse College, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in English. He went on to receive a master's in English literature from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in American and African American literature from Emory University. An educator with 25 years of experience, Lomax has taught literature at Morehouse, Spelman College, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and the University of Georgia. He is past president of The National Faculty, a nonprofit, nationwide organization that works with university scholars and local school districts to develop and implement programs to strengthen teaching in the nation's elementary and secondary schools.

A seasoned educator with experience in government and business, Lomax describes the fundamental chal-

lenge facing Dillard today as the same challenge that colleges and universities always have embraced—educating young people. He understands also that the 21st century poses a host of fresh challenges for the nation's institutions of higher education, especially historically black colleges and universities. Institutions that produced remarkable results with modest budgets in the past are recognizing that delivering a world-class education today demands access to an array of often-costly, state-of-the-art technology and other resources. Colleges and universities must aggressively compete for major

funding, as well as promising students. They must build enduring ties with their students, establishing support networks that help to guide these young people through their college experience and sustain them as they move into the marketplace. Finally, such ambitious goals require an efficient, dedicated, and highly motivated faculty and administrative staff.

It is symbolic and perhaps appropriate that Lomax, the great grandson of a woman who attended Straight University before the end of the 19th century, should lead Dillard University, an institutional descendent of Straight, from the 20th century into the 21st. It is equally symbolic that the new president's vision of Dillard becoming the world's premier higher education center for African American cultural studies captures the

spirit of the University's Reconstruction-era forbears from his great grandmother's day.

In the tradition of Dillard University, the Lomax administration is meeting today's challenges with aggressive initiatives, including expanding the institution's funding base, increasing student enrollment, enhancing technological capabilities, renovating existing facilities and constructing new ones. Dillard will build on its strong liberal arts tradition, using its existing curriculum and introducing innovative new programs to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of today's diverse, global community. Similarly, the University will draw on its historical commitment to the arts to position the institution as the premier center for African American arts and heritage in the 21st century.



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NOTABLE ALUMNI

- DR. WILLIAM BANKS, '63
- Professor of African American Studies at the University of California at Berkeley
 - Author of *Black Intellectuals: Race and Responsibility in American Life*. Recipient of the prestigious American Book Award
- DR. KAREN DRAKE, '79
- Perinatologist, Iowa Methodist Medical Center, Des Moines, Iowa
 - Played a key role in the delivery of the Iowa septuplets, November 19, 1997
- DR. RHETAUGH G. DUMAS, '51
- Dean and Professor of Nursing, University of Michigan
- MR. TERENCE R. DUVERNAY '64
- Former Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Affairs
- DR. KEVIN EARLY '82
- Criminologist and Assistant Professor, Oakland University
- MS. LISA FRAZIER, '84
- Staff Writer, *The Washington Post*
- MR. CLAIBORNE N. HAUGHTON '67
- Director of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Defense
- DR. FRANCIS C. HENDERSON '58
- Chair of the Baccalaureate Nursing Program, Alcorn State University
- MR. BILLY RAY HOBLEY '77
- Former Player, Harlem Globetrotters
- MS. GLYNNIS JOHNSON '85
- Art Director, BBDO Advertising
- DR. HENRY C. LACEY '65
- Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dillard University
- DR. HAROLD W. LUNDY '70
- Former President, Grambling State University
- DR. ELLIS M. MARSALIS, JR., '55
- Accomplished jazz musician
 - Director of Jazz Studies Program, University of New Orleans
- MR. LIONEL C. MCINTYRE, '87
- Director of the Graduate Program in Urban Planning, Columbia University
- MS. GLENDA GOODLY MCNEAL, '82
- Vice President, American Express Corporation, New York, NY
- MR. GARRETT MORRIS
- Comedian/Actor, The Jamie Foxx Show
- THE HONORABLE REVIUS O. ORTIQUE, JR., '47
- Retired Associate Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court
- MS. JACQUELINE N. RAPHAEL, '79
- Deputy Chief Nurse, U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, New Orleans, LA
- DR. JOYCE M. ROCHÉ, '70
- President, Carson Products Company, Savannah, GA
- DR. RUTH J. SIMMONS, '67
- President, Smith College, Northhampton, MA
- DR. RODRICK A. STEVENSON, '81
- Head of the Organ Transplant Department, Meharry Medical College
- THE HONORABLE CARL E. STEWART '71
- Judge, U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals
- REV. JOHNNY RAY YOUNGBLOOD, '70
- Pastor, Saint Paul Community Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY